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ABSTRACT

Traditional sex role stereotypes, as reflected in the attitudes and values of rural southern females, educators, employers, male partners, parents, and communities, have a negative influence on the southern rural female's desire for and access to non-traditional training and employment; black females face both racial and sexual bias. Mothers exert the strongest influence on their daughters' career decisions. Although federal educational policies and programs can offer opportunities for rural women to gain employment in traditionally male-dominated occupations, real change must come from rural women and others who help determine vocational choices and opportunities. A growing number of women are joining together and seeking assistance in entering non-traditional vocations, many for economic motives. Community-based organizations are expanding opportunities for women. Provision of information about economic opportunities in non-traditional vocations is one means of overcoming traditional obstacles. Information programs should: (1) include wage and salary information; (2) furnish education and career information for mothers; (3) encourage a non-sexist approach to vocational education in public school systems; (4) prepare information for potential employers and co-workers; (5) provide counseling for female vocational education students; (6) sponsor demonstration programs in the community; (7) utilize women's networks and groups; and (8) encourage rural organizations to disseminate information and foster change. (CM)

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"I Don't Want to Drive a Mack Truck!"

Rural Southern Values and Attitudes -

Barriers to Women in Non-traditional Vocational Education

A Report to the National Institute of Education

November 30, 1980

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Introduction

A major policy directive of the 1976 Amendments to the Vocational Education Act of 1963 was the elimination of sex role stereotyping in occupational education in order to improve access for women to vocational education programs traditionally dominated by men. Meeting this mandate, however, has not been uniformly possible, partially because of the Act's reliance on State and local implementation. Regional and local differences in values and attitudes affect the extent to which the policy is implemented.

In order to discover what some of these differences may be in rural areas, the National Institute of Education commissioned a series of studies to determine "...how living in an isolated or sparsely populated area affects the educational and economic opportunities for women, and what policies might expand these opportunities."

Non-traditional vocational education is not readily accessible to rural women for a variety of reasons. The purpose of this paper is to identify those values and attitudes which affect access to non-traditional vocational education for females living in the rural South.

The paper is introduced by a brief discussion of values and behavior, systematic changes in value patterns occurring nationwide and in the rural South, and an overview of values considered characteristic of the southern region of this nation. A verbal

picture of the southern female is presented, along with a brief discussion of the impact of the women's liberation movement on southern females.

In the process of clarifying rural southern attitudes and values which present barriers to women in gaining non-traditional vocational training and employment, we look at the attitudes of women themselves, as well as at the attitudes of those who influence their decisions: parents, husbands/boyfriends, peers, and community institutions--churches, schools, and businesses. In addition, black women face barriers not present for white females. However, no single institution or group is entirely responsible for posing barriers to non-traditional careers for women. In the rural South, the whole framework of traditional attitudes and values is greater than the sum of any of its parts.

The findings of this paper are based on a search of the literature on rural sociology, values, education and occupational aspirations of rural youth, and on social-anthropological descriptions of rural cultures and of rural women in particular. In addition, the personal observations and experience of educators and administrators in rural vocational-technical schools, of rural interest groups or rural women's organizations, and of academicians with a rural or education research interest were drawn upon either through interviews or through letters requesting information and comment.

Over the course of this research we conducted approximately 15 personal interviews and corresponded with about 35 additional persons.

Several limitations in data must be pointed out. First, while there is a small body of literature on rural values, the information available is very limited in scope and speaks about values in such general terms (e.g.: work, achievement, equality, freedom) as to be of little assistance in this study. Secondly, the data which are available on rural values, rural youth, and occupational aspirations concentrate almost exclusively on the adolescent male. While some literature compares occupational aspirations of white and black adolescent males, there is a paucity of data on values or aspirations of adolescent females, especially black females.

Consequently, the data are used with caution, often to provide information about the cultural context within which southern rural females function. In some cases, information about values is derived by inference from a limited data base not designed specifically to give information about values which hinder females' pursuit of non-traditional vocations. Information and conclusions are sometimes based on comment from persons interviewed for purposes of this paper, mostly southerners involved in vocational education, equity issues, southern history, women's groups, and other related concerns.

Values and Attitudes in the Rural South

According to sociologist Robin Williams, values are " ... conceptions of desirable states of affairs that are ...(used as)

criteria for...choice or as justifications for proposed or actual behavior"(16, p. 71).

The behavior of individuals is strongly affected by basic cultural values and proscriptions learned from early childhood onward. Values and patterns of behavior learned in the home in early years are reinforced by religious and educational institutions. Mutually-held values guide both the behavior of individuals and the functioning of institutions. Understanding and identifying those values which affect the behavior, goals, motivations, and aspirations of rural females, and the rural families and communities within which they function, can contribute to an understanding of the barriers which hinder rural females from pursuing vocational education in occupations not traditionally held by women.

Values are not static; they can and do change on a systemwide basis. Improvements in technology, especially in media technology, social and geographic mobility, and changes in political and economic structures contribute nationwide to systematic changes in value structures. The communications "revolution" and the Civil Rights movement have helped to bring the rural South more into the mainstream of American life. As a result, over the past three decades, both black and white rural southern youth have been exposed to norms and lifestyles shared by the nation at large.

The Rural South: Still a Unique Region

However, despite the standardizing influences of increased schooling, industrialization, and the media, the South has remained culturally distinct in many respects. The literature substantiates that rural values tend to change at a slower pace than urban values. Perhaps the rural South has resisted change because electrification, industrialization, and national education policies have all been slower in reaching it. Racial attitudes have also undoubtedly played their part in the maintenance of the rural South's unique cultural identity and in hindering implementation of national education policy.

Dr. John Shelton Reed, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, speaking to the 45th Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association in Atlanta in November, 1979, noted three areas in which Southerners are different from the rest of the nation: an attachment to local matters apart from world affairs, a cultural tendency to violence, and a deep attachment to organized religion. At the same meeting, Dr. William C. Havard of Vanderbilt University identified the "vital signs" of the Southerner: concern with the conduct of life, preference for concrete rather than abstract matters, organized religion, a sense of place, and close ties to family and home.

More than any other area of the nation, the rural South is rooted and bound by its history and tradition. Despite differences

in terrain and local customs, from Appalachian mountains to dusty tobacco roads, from the Atlantic sea islands to the Gulf coast, it is all "The South." Fiercely proud of its heritage and resistant to change and outside influences, some rural areas show little evidence of twentieth century technological advances.

According to Thomas R. Ford, Director of the Center for Developmental Change at the University of Kentucky, "Rural people are generally more traditional, clinging longer to older views and resisting new ideas" (10, p. 8). Dr. Ford maintains that a more plausible ecological explanation for rural traditionalism than social isolation, which was the prime explanation before the onset of television and superhighways, is that "population size, density and diversity are significant determinants of the generation and acceptance of new ideas" (10, p. 8). If this thesis is true, then urban centers, with their high population densities, have the critical mass necessary to generate and rapidly accept new ideas. Rural areas do not. In some parts of the rural South, to quote the South's literary scion, William Faulkner, "The past is not dead; it is not even past."

The lessons were taught during the Civil Rights movement and labor union battles: the South will resist—passively, then persuasively, and then violently, whichever is necessary to maintain cherished traditions. Change, like everything else in the South, happens slowly and from the inside.

The South is a myriad of dichotomies, difficult for an outsider to understand, and it does not give out its secrets readily. In nearly every small community one finds evidence of wealth next to dire poverty; a tradition of hospitality and gentility, and violence; a concern for fundamental Christian beliefs juxtapositioned against racism and oppression.

The Southern Woman

The southern woman reflects the dichotomies of the region. Black or white, rich or poor, urban or rural, she is inclined to be self-effacing; but under that soft, reticent exterior beats the heart of a strong, stubborn, proud human being, and no one knows that better than the southern man. The middle-class, educated southern woman, the arch-type known as the "southern belle," is often the epitome of the iron fist in the velvet glove. Or, as a southern writer recently put it, "a Mack truck disguised as a pink powder puff." The southern woman, black and white, is becoming more and more evident in politics and in business, in both rural and urban places. Black and white women are glimpsed occasionally in construction hats or on telephone poles.

The rural southern woman, black or white, is well known to the men who live and work beside her for her strength and tenacity. She can plow a furrow, pick cotton, chop firewood, cook, sew, raise kids, and work from dawn to dark. But she will not be seen

disagreeing with her husband (or her father) in public. She is a staunch supporter of the southern man (in public) and whatever her needs and goals, she is not likely to plan a strategy that would put down or detract from the men in her family or her community. (Needless to say, "women's lib" is considered vulgar and crass by many rural southern women as well as men.) Although rural southern women, like most women in the rural areas of the nation, want to expand and improve their opportunities for work, education, and social interaction, they want to do it in their own way and in their own time, and with the support of their family and their peers. Outsiders with strong opinions about what to do and how to do it will find almost as much resistance from southern women as from the men.

The southern female is the keeper of the southern heritage and traditions: while men hold most of the major local offices, she takes charge of community activities through the churches and schools. This is true of black and white females. She records family and community history and passes that heritage on to the younger generation, fanning the flames of pride in family, in community, and in being southern. The southern black female's role as bulwark of the family is stronger and more overt than that of the white female. Black single female heads of household hold together many southern black families.

It is no mystery that the women are the keepers and defenders of southern heritage. Not only do they bear the primary responsibility for the raising and education of young children, but they are often limited in their experience outside the

community. Black women bear an exceptionally heavy burden of childrearing responsibilities. One-chird of black women in the South are heads of household, compared to one-fifth of white women. Over the years, military service and search for employment have taken many southern men away from their roots and the welfare system has chased many black men away. But it is not unusual fo. a rural woman to live all of her life without leaving the county in which she was born. While family and community are the core of their lives, they are not blind to the inherent inequalities, the poverty, prejudice and violence, nor are they unconcerned.

Economic needs are pressing more and more rural women to look to expand their horizons beyond their traditional limited roles and job opportunities. Most people we've talked to feel that the impetus to non-traditional jobs is predominantly economic.

During the last decade, the "women's liberation" movement has undoubtedly had some impact on rural values concerning appropriate women's work. "Despite the fact that low-income rural women are perhaps least influenced by the feminist literature and by the press given to the Women's Movement, it would be erroneous to assume they are not at least partial participants in the evolutionary process of women's consciousness" (11, p. 10). A recent conference sponsored by Rural American Women in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, was attended by a number of female carpenters and coal miners. Selected vocational schools boast of a female enrolled

in electronics or drafting courses and occasionally one finds a female studying air-conditioning repair or welding.

Research on occupational status projections provides some evidence that younger girls (5th-6th grades) interviewed in 1975 chose a wider variety of occupations, outside of those traditionally assigned to women, than did girls interviewed in 1969. However, well over half of those interviewed in 1975 continued to choose the traditional female occupations: nurse, secretary, teacher (6, pp. 6-7).

While some changes are occurring in values concerning appropriate vocational, educational, and familial roles for women, these changes appear not to have diffused through the rural South sufficiently to encourage women to pursue non-traditional education and employment opportunities in significant numbers.

Institutional Attitudes and Values

Attitudes and values are learned by the child at an early age in the home, and are reinforced or modified by religious and educational institutions, the media, and peers as the child grows towards adulthood. This section discusses predominant sets of values: community values, religious beliefs, and sex roles affecting attitudes about appropriate career choices for females.

Community Values

Some rural sociologists maintain that sense of community is a strong value orientation for rural persons: "Each rural community has a specific physical location (whose) limits...are indelibly impressed in the minds of the inhabitants of the locality" (16, p. 61). These boundaries determine the areas of mutual awareness and concern, social participation, and collective action of various types.

According to sociologist John Shelton Reed, the data support the conclusion that southerners show a peculiar attachment to their home places. There is a "rootedness" and sense of community evident in southern culture. The tendency to find one's models for behavior and belief close to home is more pronounced in the South than elsewhere, where "cosmopolitanism" prevails more strongly. Southerners are relatively provincial (local loyalty and deference to local opinion) and will likely remain so (14, pp. 6-8).

While Dr. Reed's comments speak to southern culture in general, not specifically to the rural South, it must be noted that the South is still a predominantly rural region and those areas which are urbanizing still have strong rural roots, so it seems valid to interpolate the sense of his comments to apply to the rural South, especially considering that they were presented to a gathering of rural sociologists.

Sharon McKern, in her enchanting book, Redneck Mothers, Good ol' Girls, and other Southern Belles, also claims that community (and family) are important southern values: "In the South, place and family are the essence of identity, and they perpetuate the old, provincial values" (13, p. 65).

While some of the literature points to a strong sense of community and family as a characteristic of the South, responses to questions posed for this study were about equally divided on whether the need to leave the community for education or employment was a hindrance to non-traditional vocations for females.

While the evidence from our study is divided, it is demonstrable that necessity of leaving family or community is a difficult barrier for some females to overcome. Certain communities, because of their very small size, isolation, or long history of shared traditions, may be imbued with stronger community loyalty and/or "fear of outsider" values. And some females may find the need to leave home a greater problem to overcome than do others.

Religious Values

Our search of rural sociology literature provided little information on the role which religious values play in the rural southern female's pursuit of non-traditional vocations. Only one source commented directly on how religious beliefs related to women's roles. Flora and Johnson suggest that "...we should not

forget the force of fundamentalist Christianity, with its emphasis on reproduction and maternal values, rather than on sensual ones. Fundamentalist religions tend to support the belief that 'women's place is in the home'" (9, p. 169). Undoubtedly experienced with situations of this kind, several respondents to our questions remarked that churches promote anti-feminist values or that the churches' pro-family stance usually means an anti-women stance.

However, only one-third of our respondents noted the role of religious values as a possible barrier to women's non-traditional vocational choices. Given the opportunity to do so, two-thirds did not name religious values as a barrier to the rural southern females' pursuit of non-traditional vocational education.

Indeed, religion is undoubtedly a minor and rapidly diminishing factor in the value structures of many rural southern females. However, and despite the lack of empirical evidence available within the limited scope of this paper, in the opinion of these authors, old-time Bible Belt religion continues to have a strong influence on rural females whose ties to the church are still strong. While this group may be in the minority, the possible influence of religious values on career choices of some rural females, both black and white, needs to be considered.

In many rural areas of the South, the church is the center of social and community life. Many churches are fundamentalist or conservative in theology and still have rigid doctrines about

separation of the sexes. These doctrines support the inequality of women and their exclusion from men's work. The vocational choices of females who have been brought up in these churches are undoubtedly influenced by religious values which prescribe a subordinate role for the woman: the man is the head of the family and the wife finds her fulfillment through him. The only acceptable role for a decent woman, according to these doctrines, is as a housewife and mother. These churches emphasize women's passivity, meekness, and servitude. These attitudes tend to de-emphasize women's potential role outside of the home and certainly do not support her non-traditional vocational aspirations.

Sex Role Stereotyping and Employment

In rural areas, sex role stereotyping has by far the greatest influence on women's desire and ability to pursue non-traditional vocations. Sex role stereotypes appear to play a stronger role in directing vocational choices of rural southern females than choices of the population at large. Furthermore, there is greater variation between the sexes in job expectation than between students from places with different historical traditions, ethnic cultures, geographic and terrain imperatives, and places of residence (8, p. 3).

Practically without exception, the respondents to questions posed for this paper mention sex role stereotypes as a major deterrent to females entering non-traditional vocations. Typical statements

about the role which these stereotypes play in females' job choices were:

> Women care too much about maintaining the feminine role.
>
> Rural women are involved in the traditional female roles at home.
>
> Motherhood and family responsibilities are the greatest barriers for rural women.
>
> Men frown on women and girls leaving home.
>
> Many believe non-traditional work is difficult and dangerous, but often it is not.
>
> Women have been conditioned to think that these jobs are for men only.
>
> A man's 'macho' image may be threatened if his wife is doing work similar to what he's been doing.
>
> The reason women don't get (non-traditional vocational jobs) is mainly sex-stereotyping. I mean the unfounded stereotypes that this work is too heavy for women, that they aren't physically capable.
>
> Men want to believe that women work to supplement their (own) income, even if the wife's income is essential.
>
> Women are socialized at home, in school and in church to be subordinate to men and to highlight their feminine side.
>
> Women think their husbands should support them, and men see themselves as a failure if their wives work.
>
> It is easier to combine the traditional occupations with the wife and mother roles.
>
> Good wives do not go against their husband's wishes (i.e., the wife must have husband's approval before entering job training).

> Such work (non-traditional vocations) is dirty work and too hard for women-- they are physically unable to carry loads or lift materials.
>
> Femininity is a major barrier: most husbands would rather see the wife or mother in a traditional woman's job such as secretary rather than a diesel mechanic who comes home greasy.
>
> Rural men still believe that a woman's place is in the home.
>
> Women don't consider competing in a man's world.
>
> Many rural women see their role as being subordinate to men. They do not yet have the self-confidence or desire to challenge male figures in their families who see women in such submissive roles.
>
> Family members' roles are strictly identified. A much more conservative attitude exists here than in the rest of the country.
>
> Even when women do work outside the home, outside work is considered secondary to being wives and mothers.
>
> I've seen many changes, but rural people still believe that women's place is in the home.

These responses are corroborated by other research. A recent study of psychological adaptations among female adolescents and their families in rural east Tennessee shows that these girls are essentially untouched by the feminist perspective; they harbor "an ideal of escape into love, marriage, childbearing and home life." These girls exhibited "a tenacious need to preserve their sense of integrity and loyalty to their own kin, and a spirit of community" (3, p. 78).

Staff of the American Friends Service Committee's Southeast Public Education Program corroborate these findings. They say that rural teenage girls are still very interested in "nesting"

and getting married and don't want to compete with men. They exhibit a "1950's" mentality. Other research shows that occupational sex role stereotypes contribute to a narrowness of rural females' responses in contrast to considerable dispersion in rural males' responses (3, p. 3).

Social-anthropological accounts of the lives of rural southern females provide additional insight into the effect of sex role stereotyping. The child of a black migrant laborer, portrayed in Robert Coles' and Jane Hallowell Coles' book, Women in Crisis, felt that women were not in control of their own destiny: "I've asked my mother how she got into this life. She said, 'A woman marries a man and that's how she gets into her life. Her life is his life, a branch of his tree...' My mother has lost track of herself; she thinks of herself as someone's echo... It's a man's world. You need the men if you're going to have some money" (7, pp. 14, 17, 30).

Some of the women interviewed for Kathy Kahn's book, Hillbilly Women, echoed similar sentiments: "It's my place to take care of the kids. He works and brings in the money" (12, p. 103). While many of these women shared in the traditional sex role stereotypes, they did so with a distinct sense of independence and pride: "I'm proud to be a women. I don't want to run a Euclid earthmover. I just want to be a woman and have a man that has sense enough to treat me like an equal" (12, p. 184).

It appears that the impact which values and attitudes have on rural women's pursuit of non-traditional vocational

education and employment is still profound and pervasive, despite the emergence of the women's liberation movement. The reason for this, and for the continued influence of sex role stereotyping on rural southern females' vocational choices, was summed up by the ex-wife of a well-known Southern Senator. "Militant feminism is considered impolite in the rural South," says Betty Talmadge, "... feminism implies change, and an agricultural society (or an industrial one that continues to think of itself as rural) is resistant to change by outside forces, and is enslaved by patriarchal traditions" (13, p. 166).

Community Values Reflected in Rural Southern Schools

In many instances, sex role stereotypes and attitudes are reiterated by school administrators, counselors, and teachers at all levels, and thus reinforce traditional attitudes held by both male and female students about appropriate educational and employment choices for women. About two-thirds of the respondents for this study believed that the traditions and values of teachers, counselors and school administrators contribute to preventing rural women from seeking non-traditional vocational training and employment.

While teachers, counselors, administrators and other educators by no means exercise the only influence on career choices of rural females, they nevertheless are important influences and

many appear to adhere to traditional sexist attitudes about employment for women. Our brief survey indicates that they also tend to adhere to traditional teaching methods which do not expose students to information about non-traditional vocations for women.

Some typical comments were that teachers and counselors, though inadvertantly, still stereotype jobs by sex; they still hold stereotyped attitudes themselves; and they are conservative, traditional, and not totally informed.*

Principals, counselors, vocational teachers, and "Washington bureaucrats" were each identified at least twice as being the most important factor in either maintaining traditional values or being able to change them.

Several respondents felt that rural high school principals adhere most strongly to traditional sex role definitions for women, perhaps because in the rural South, the position of principal tends to be filled by the physical education teacher or coach who has risen from a teaching to an administrative position.

Several persons remarked that counselors are still guiding females into low-paying, traditionally female, "pink collar" jobs. Sometimes females are encouraged to obtain job training only "to have something to fall back on." One person commented that

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*In response to a letter requesting information about women in non-traditional vocational programs, one director of placement at a southern technical institute answered, "We do not offer vocational educational programs related to your study," indicating an unawareness of the potential choice by a female of a technology-oriented career.

rural areas seem to be slowest to incorporate non-sexist career counseling into school programs.

Vocational teachers were cited by several persons as having negative, rather than positive, impacts on female students' pursuit of non-traditional vocations. A woman who eventually became a truck driver, interviewed for a book about women who are doing "men's jobs," told how she hadn't been allowed to take wood shop when in high school because "wood shop is only for boys!" Vocational teachers who are reluctant to accept new ideas about women's equality in education and work can discourage a female student at that important moment when she is first trying out the idea of entering a new area. Alternatively, a vocational teacher with positive values about women in men's work can be a source of information and provide a positive environment for learning new vocations.

The school principal and the director of vocational education are the key persons whose support appears to be necessary to inaugurate new programs, because in rural areas they are the key decision-makers with influence over curriculum.

Attitudes of federal education policy makers were also cited as having a negative impact. These people are perceived as tending to assume that rural ways are "bad," and that local people don't know how to run their own affairs.

The rural South, which has traditionally been a staunch defender of "states' rights," objects to the intrusion of federal policy and federal courts into matters viewed as local affairs. Federally-imposed desegregation and equal treatment for females are not welcomed in many parts of the rural South. Many rural school systems do not request federal funds because of requirements tied to receipt of the money. These requirements are often viewed as either bitter pills to swallow, or meddling—to be covertly ignored when possible. Exceptions to these attitudes do exist, of course, and one finds many communities which have responded with equanimity and good grace to federal imperatives regarding equity.

If students are not exposed to role models or opportunities in non-traditional vocations, they will not consider a non-traditional vocation. In some rural settings, the problem may be less the overt notions about "women's place" than it is a lack of imaginative programming to encourage females to break new ground in new fields of employment. Lack of time, money, staff, and sometimes willingness to develop experimental programs, sex-fair curriculum materials, and counseling were cited by one vocational school administrator as a problem.

Opportunities to show females in non-traditional vocations are often overlooked. We reviewed literature promoting several vocational-technical institutions in rural south Georgia and found that, with a few exceptions, females were portrayed studying

traditionally female vocations: secretarial science, beautician skills, homemaker skills, and day care or nurses aide skills. Females were also shown in other traditional roles: in prom gowns or beauty contests. The exceptions to these traditional pictures of females were a female draftsperson and a female horticulture student.

A film prepared by the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Association, headquartered in North Carolina, to encourage migrant laborers, male and female, to undertake vocational training fell into this same pattern. Men were shown learning wiring, plumbing, welding, auto mechanics, and fishing skills. Women were shown learning typing and other clerical skills, practical nursing, hairdressing and day care skills. Only one female was shown learning a "man's" job. She was welding.

Values and Attitudes of Rural Employers

The traditional sex role attitudes and values of employers create a significant barrier for rural women seeking employment in non-traditional jobs. Over two-thirds of the respondents identified employers as preventing rural women from seeking entrance into non-traditional vocational education and jobs, and one-quarter identified employers' values as the greatest barrier for entry of women into non-traditional jobs. Employers tend also to believe in traditional familial and work roles for women.

A problem identified frequently was the lack of job opportunities for both men and women. Although lack of job opportunities is not a value problem, the decision to fill a vacancy with a woman rather than a man is likely to be affected by the value-orientation of the employer. Moreover, lack of opportunities in a given field may discourage females (and males) from obtaining training in that area. Interviewees identified employer bias, resistance to change, and sexual stereotyping in hiring as barriers to females' employment in non-traditional vocations. Specific attitudes identified were: women's physical inability to perform the work, women taking jobs away from men, and possible drops in productivity due to sexual distractions. When a female is given a non-traditional job, her work may be scrutinized more closely than a man's.

Employers may doubt women's ability to physically perform certain non-traditional jobs, such as those requiring strength, ability to lift heavy loads, or physical dexterity. Employers are concerned about on-the-job safety. Several respondents felt that employers were not sufficiently informed about women's potential for capably performing typical non-traditional jobs.

Employers' belief that "the man should be the breadwinner" is another deterrant identified. Some employers still appear to believe that men should earn more than women, and they therefore exclude women from the better paying jobs. They may also be afraid that women will be in competition with men and take jobs away from

men. One respondent felt that employers show women the toughest and most dangerous jobs in order to discourage them. An employer may fear he will antagonize his male employers by hiring females.

Employers were perceived as being concerned that the physical presence of a female on the job would be distracting to male employees. Some employers may be anxious about having work routines disrupted. They may also be afraid to hire women because of fear of marginal sexual behavior (patting, pinching, verbal harassment) on the job among their employees.

The number and variety of job opportunities available also affect a female's ability to obtain non-traditional employment, and her motivation to study one of these vocations. When the economy is tight, employers don't want to take chances on women. Men with more experience are less of a risk. In general, lack of job opportunities may discourage some rural females from pursuing non-traditional vocational training (6, p. 7).

Influences on the Rural Female's Career Decision

In order to understand how best to change the fixed notion that certain occupations are not appropriate for females, it is necessary to identify the most important influences on the rural southern female's career decision. The influence of the churches, educators, and employers has been discussed in previous sections. This section discusses the role which parents,

and especially mothers, play in modeling children's career choices; the role ascribed to husbands or boyfriends in the rural female's career decision; and the positive impact which the presence of female role models has on decisions to enter non-traditional vocations.

Role of Parents

A review of the literature on occupational status projections for youth show that parents, and especially mothers, seem to have the strongest influence on career aspirations of rural youth. Evidence indicates that parents, and especially mothers, have a preeminent influence on the child's career thinking and advice seeking, at least as far as the child perceives and reports it. Research shows that "...mothers are the most influential single persons in the socialization of children and in their early career thinking specifically" (6, p. 8).

Children's perceptions of occupational prestige and the opportunity structure begin at a very young age. As early as elementary school, rural children rank occupations in an order almost identical to adults (4, pp. 2-3). Mothers' status projections for their children were found to be an important influence.

Several studies conducted in South Carolina found that few students indicated that high school counselors exercised a significant influence on their career choice, but that parents exercised a greater influence (1, p. 8).

Responses from rural educators, rural women, and academicians also confirm the important role which parents play in influencing their daughters' choice of vocation. Nearly every respondent indicated some type of influence by parents on female's non-traditional vocational choices. Research also shows that mothers have more influence than fathers on children's career thinking, and especially on that of female children. Mothers are ranked very high as sources of career advice for both males and females and are the principal source of advice on educational projections for both sexes (6, p. 8). However, rural mothers were also found to be more "narrow" in aspirations for their daughters, "wider" in aspirations for sons (3, p. 3).

Role of Male Partners

We could find nothing in the literature to indicate the role which male friends or husbands play in influencing rural females' occupational choices. However, responses to our questions show that boyfriends and husbands are perceived as having a strong influence on women's non-traditional occupational choices. Comments we received showed that, almost without exception, the influence they exercise is negative. They were seldom mentioned as encouraging non-traditional jobs for females, although need or encouragement and support by this group for females wishing to pursue non-traditional jobs were mentioned as important for success.

Males were perceived, variously, as being threatened, needing to be the sole financial support, feeling sexual anxiety and jealousy, disliking the dirty aspects of non-traditional jobs for women, and wanting wives to stay at home to take care of domestic and child care duties. Husbands don't want their wives "working with other men all day." They express overt and covert disapproval. They may discourage their wives from working outside the home although it may be an economic necessity. They need to perceive themselves as "head of the household" and perceive themselves as a failure if their wife works. Jealousy, ego deflation, and embarrassment over the wife's occupation (if non-traditional) are all factors. One respondent mentioned that the concurrence of husbands must be sought because they generally have power to sabotage training plans by withholding money or transportation to school or job.

This respondent also provided a useful, and increasingly true, insight into why a man is threatened by his wife's pursuit of non-traditional vocational training. Based on her experience with a program designed to encourage females to enter technological fields traditionally employing men, she observed that many women are waiting until they finish training so they can leave their husbands. The husband may oppose a wife's getting any job, and especially a non-traditional (i.e. highly paid) one, because she will gain power in the marriage or the ability to become self-supporting and leave him.

Only one respondent indicated that husbands generally do not object to wives taking non-traditional jobs. This respondent said: "Husbands don't object as much as people think they do--they like the extra money, too."

Peer Influence

Peer group members have some influence, albeit less significant, on vocational decisions. Several respondents mentioned that peer pressure or derision will discourage a female student from studying a male-dominated vocation. Interviews with students at a post-secondary technical institute in South Georgia indicated that females in non-traditional courses of study are sometimes given a "hard time" by males in the same courses. However, peer opinion seems to be significantly less influential on career decisions than are parental opinion and satisfactory role models.

Role Models for Females

Despite the fact that we asked no questions about role models for females, the absence of female role models in non-traditional jobs was identified by about one-third of respondents as a significant barrier. While presence or absence of appropriate role models is certainly not a value orientation, reference to role models does teach females (and males) some of the values they hold about jobs. Rural southern females have generations of traditional role

models upon which to pattern themselves, and few non-traditional ones. Rural areas suffer a dearth of role models and field observation experience which can broaden the realization of young girls that the world offers other career choices than motherhood and secretarial work, according to a report on the educational needs of girls and women (5, p. 17).

Absence of female role models in non-traditional vocations, both in vocational schools and in the larger world, thus becomes a barrier to females learning positive attitudes about their possible relationship to non-traditional vocations.

Attitudes and Values of Black Females

Interviews and research conducted for this paper indicated that rural southern black females are raised with value systems similar to the conservative and traditional values which tend to influence the vocational decisions of rural southern white females. They tend to be brought up to get married, raise a family, and become an accepted member of the community. In many cases, the values which govern their behavior are even more conservative than those governing white females.

The primary differences appear to be (1) that rural blacks, as a group, tend to be lower on the socioeconomic scale and thus face special problems of isolation, lack of role models, and lack of basic skills; and (2) black females face "double jeopardy" when

attempting to pursue non-traditional vocational education or careers.

Even more than the rural southern white female, some rural Southern black females tend to have grown up in isolated situations. Some seldom have traveled far beyond the boundaries of the home county; they have strong community and religious ties; and have had little exposure to the variety of opportunities available.

They tend to face "double jeopardy" in the rural vocational school and at the rural place of employment, having to overcome traditional attitudes about the appropriate role of women as well as long-held attitudes of racial discrimination.

Obtaining a non-traditional job and then holding onto it are both exceedingly difficult for the black rural Southern female. Interviewees recounted several stories to us about how black women were harassed on the job and even lost their job because of both sexual and racial harassment. "Whereas black men will be reticent about openly harassing white women, black women are considered 'fair game' for abuse by men of both races," a representative of the Southern Mutual Help Association told us. Another black female recounted how she was called the little "nigger girl" right from the first day of her job on a highway construction crew. When she complained to a supervisor, her job was terminated without explanation.

While many rural women, black or white, might prefer to stay home and care for their children, the simple factor of economics,

according to several black women who were interviewed, makes them choose the better paying, non-traditional jobs. All agreed, however, that getting out there and doing it is a lot harder for black women than for white women.

Conclusions

In talking with rural southern educators and with rural southern women, we have found an openness, willingness, and interest in the expansion of opportunities for women into areas of training and employment traditionally dominated by men. Many people are perplexed by the multiplicity of barriers facing rural women, including the attitudes of women themselves, and would appreciate some support and creative thinking about solutions to the problems.

As we stated at the outset, no one sector of society is the major source of the problems nor the major barrier. And, as with all endeavors, time, patience and tenacity are the keys to success. This may be especially true for solving the problems in the rural South, where all aspects of life move more slowly and changes unfold at the pace with which people feel most comfortable.

A policy framework can be established at the national level to encourage change, but if changes are to be real, they must come from within the rural communities, from rural women, and from others who help to determine the vocational choices and opportunities of rural women. They cannot be imposed from the outside.

This section summarizes major conclusions of this paper which federal educational policy-makers must take into consideration when proposing policies and programs to assist rural southern women in expanding their vocational horizons. It also discusses policy and

other remedies to overcome value barriers and recommends specific programmatic actions to assist rural women in overcoming values and attitudes which hinder their pursuit of vocational education in fields traditionally dominated by men.

Summary

1. The rural South, to some degree, remains culturally distinct from the rest of the nation. The rural southerner tends to be more conservative, slower to accept change, more intent on abiding by traditional sex role definitions, more influenced by conservative religion, and somewhat more tied to local community and family than are persons from other parts of the nation.

2. The rural southern female tends to hold values and attitudes similar to those held by other females, but sex role definitions are probably more deep-seated in the rural southern female. At the same time, she may, paradoxically, be more independent, more conservative, and more devoted to family and traditional sex role responsibilities than other females.

3. To date, the women's liberation movement has had less impact in the rural South than in other parts of the nation, but its influence may finally be increasing.

4. The rural southerner tends to hold stronger views about the importance of the local community, and a stronger aversion to outsiders, than persons from other parts of the nation. While

these attitudes may influence the decision of a female not to pursue a non-traditional vocation, they tend not to be as influential as other attitudes.

5. Religious values tend to have a direct, strong influence on a female's vocational decisions only in those instances where religious values strongly influence all aspects of her life.

6. Sex role stereotypes still hold sway over rural southern females and strongly influence their vocational decisions.

7. Sex role stereotypes are reflected in attitudes of rural educators. While not the primary influence in job decisions, rural educators and other education policy makers do have an impact on career decisions and on making new opportunities known and available to female students.

8. Employers in rural areas in the South reflect traditional sex role values prevailing in the community. Their attitudes were cited frequently as having negative impacts on females' potential for obtaining non-traditional jobs.

9. Parents, and particularly mothers, appear to exercise the predominant influence on females' career decisions.

10. Male partners also exercise a great deal of influence over rural southern women's career decisions.

11. The influence of peers is, overall, a minor factor in females' career decisions.

12. The absence of female role models and mentors in non-traditional jobs in rural areas in the South is a deterrant to more females entering these jobs.

13. Black females share the traditional values held by white females, and in many cases, may tend to be even more conservative in attitude. They face a compounded problem of both racial and sexual bias in non-traditional jobs.

New Directions for Rural Southern Women

While no figures are available, it appears that a growing number of women are breaking out of the traditional mode, joining together, and seeking assistance in entering non-traditional vocations. They are forming cooperatives and small businesses to create jobs for themselves, and are gaining employment in business and industry in jobs traditionally held by men. Often they have done this with the help and support of other women, and men, in the community who have formed organizations to train, inform and support women and minorities. These women, who are the rural female pioneers into new job opportunities, may be of great assistance in providing models, mentors, and support through networks for other rural southern females who wish to follow in their footsteps.

Community based organizations such as the Coal Employment Project, the Sharecroppers Association, the Southern Women's

Cooperative, the Southern Mutual Help Association, and many others, are forming, growing, meeting, and finding ways to build networks dedicated to expanding opportunities for southern rural women.

During the fall of 1979 a conference, sponsored by Rural American Women (RAW), was held in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, for and with rural women from the Southeast. Women participating were for the most part low income rural women: factory workers, housewives, cooks, carpenters, small business owners, farmworkers, coal miners, seamstresses, etc. The main issue under consideration at the various workshops and discussion groups was women and power. How do southern women gain power over their own lives and how do they use it? How do women come to understand that it is all right to take control of their lives and make decisions freely, and how does that attitude come to be all right with their peers, their communities, and their life partners?

A primary focus of the conference was education and employment opportunities for rural women. Many of the comments and recommendations in this paper come from women who attended this conference. Some were women who have had success in gaining non-traditional training and employment themselves; some were in the business of securing such training and employment for other women; and some were looking for opportunities and spoke about the barriers preventing them from achieving their goals.

The main result of the conference was the realization that when rural southern women gather together and share their knowledge, experience, and support, they form a network which is growing into a potentially powerful force for change in the rural South.

Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

National federal policy, as expressed in the 1976 Amendments to the Vocational Education Act of 1963, attempts to provide women equity in access to non-traditional vocational education. This policy has not met with uniform success across the nation and must continue to be addressed in federal legislative, budgetary and programmatic actions if the objective of equal access is to be attained.

However, while it is possible to take certain steps at the federal, state and local levels to encourage equal access, it is impossible to require the change of local values and attitudes which impede equal access for women. This section notes some failures of federal policy to address the issues, problems in legislating attitudinal change, and suggests steps which can be taken to encourage change. Federal policy, through the 1976 Amendments, has addressed the issue of equity for women. It remains for implementation of policy, at federal, state, and local levels, to adequately reach the goals.

The action agenda of the federal Small Community and Rural Development Policy does not mention the unique problems affecting rural women, while the problems of other minorities such as Indians, the elderly, and migrant farmworkers are mentioned. Neither are the special problems of rural women, caused by values and attitudes specific to rural areas, mentioned in a recent (August, 1980) status report on the Education Action Agenda for the President's Rural Policy Initiative.

The federal Small Community and Rural Development Policy should be amended to specifically address the needs of rural women. The Education Task Force, and its Vocational and Adult Education, Rural Migrant Education, Incentive, and Materials for Vocational Education sections, should look at the unique value problems faced by rural women, and design programs to address them.

Rural demonstration projects in water and sewer, housing, energy, etc., being carried out under the auspices of the Rural Initiatives, should also provide models and opportunities for non-traditional employment for women. A clear opportunity for public education that changes attitudes about women's employment in non-traditional areas exists in these projects. Reports and publicity on these projects should contain specific information on non-traditional employment opportunities for women.

However, there is a limit to what federal policy itself can accomplish. Policy directives must be accompanied by appropriate

legal requirements, budgetary resources, and programmatic provisions and opportunities. It is not within the scope of this paper to examine the effectiveness of all remedies which have been suggested or which could be suggested to carry out policy, but only to identify values and attitudes which interfere with those remedies which have been followed to date. And no remedies can force changes in individual values and attitudes nor force appropriate responses. Values can change, however, given time and appropriate information.

Our research for this paper revealed one significant factor which has been effective in changing attitudes about the appropriateness of non-traditional vocations for women: the possibility of earning considerably more money was identified by many respondents to our survey as the most significant impetus to changing attitudes about appropriate work choices. As a southern black female coal miner said: "It's a dirty job. But when you look at the choice of working all your life for $3.00 an hour waiting tables or cleaning house, compared to making $9.00 an hour in the mines--well, you figure out pretty quick that dirt washes off!"

Women's jobs in the rural South (domestic, motel worker, sewing machine operator, textile worker, nurse's aide, food services, cashier) have traditionally paid significantly less than jobs traditionally held by men. According to officials at Trident Technical College in Charleston, South Carolina, jobs traditionally reserved "for men only" tend to pay approximately half again as much as traditional women's jobs.

Our research showed that females who chose non-traditional vocations did so because of better pay and more economic security. When they become aware of the opportunity to significantly increase their earning capacity, many females are glad to discard traditional values about appropriate work for women and pursue non-traditional vocations.

The authors of this paper recommend that provision of information about economic opportunities in non-traditional vocations may be one of the best ways to assist in overcoming traditional obstacles to non-traditional vocations for rural southern females. We do not mean to say that all resistance will immediately disappear, or that rural values are "wrong," but that appropriate information can be a strong catalyst for change.

The following pages of this paper summarize programmatic actions which can be taken at state and local levels to assist in directing rural southern females to new vocational opportunities. The types of programs suggested here might be undertaken as demonstration projects, funded at the federal level and carried out by state or local grant recipients.

Wage and Salary Information

Within its information program, using public service announcements and educational films, the Department of Education should disseminate information about wage and salary reimbursements

likely from different types of employment. When female students become aware of the wide differential in earning potential between traditionally male and traditionally female jobs, they are more likely to be interested in pursuing the higher paying, non-traditional jobs.

Education and Career Information for Mothers

Values about appropriate jobs for women are internalized by females at an early age and are reinforced throughout their childhood and adolescent years. Demonstration programs can be designed to provide mothers with information about the range of occupations, educational requirements, skills needed, kind of work performed, and probable level of reimbursement available to women in non-traditional fields. Armed with this kind of information, mothers may be able to envision their female children in other than traditional jobs, and thus help guide them in that direction. A side benefit of such a program might be to interest the mothers themselves in non-traditional vocations!

Non-sexist Approaches to Vocational Education in the Elementary and Secondary School Systems

Through funding for demonstration projects, rural school systems might be encouraged to expand the horizons of female students about

job possibilities through a variety of actions.

Exposure to non-traditional vocations should begin at an early age. Day care and kindergarten programs can encourage girls to play with construction toys usually reserved for boys. Girls can learn to use screwdrivers, hammers, and nuts and bolts, at an early age. Woodshop or painting projects can be undertaken by elementary girls (and boys) with proper supervision. (Likewise, boys can learn to cook and sew.) As students progress to junior high school, more sophisticated projects can be provided to them without regard to sex role stereotypes. Programs must be designed to expose girls to a wide variety of choices so that their interests are whetted and they have an opportunity to explore a variety of skills.

Field trips for girls (and boys) to places of employment can be initiated beginning as early as kindergarten. Whenever possible, females actually working at non-traditional jobs should be visited.

At the high school level, more experience in the form of internships should be provided, to give male and female students experience at places of work. As often as possible, female role models should be supplied.

Community faculty resources (community members who can share their own vocational experiences) should be drawn upon to discuss their vocation with students. Information about skills and aptitudes needed, education and training, working hours and conditions, and pay can be shared with students. Whenever possible, of course,

females in non-traditional vocations should be called on to assist. But since few or none may be available from the local community, male resource persons can be invited to speak to both girls and boys.

When direct experience in vocational shops cannot be provided to younger students, they can at a minimum visit areawide voc-ed training facilities on an occasional basis. These visits should always be arranged so as to provide both girls and boys exposure to opposite-sex vocations.

A "career day" might be organized for female students, bringing in women from places outside the local community, if necessary. This type of conference might be sponsored by the area vocational-technical school, or post-secondary vocational institution. Area high schools would then be invited to participate and to bring their students to the day's activities. Whenever possible, local women with prestige and leadership ability who can serve as role models should be asked to participate. Other opinion leaders from the community and employers might also be invited to attend and to participate by speaking about job opportunities offered in their firms.

Throughout the educational program, adequate information on wage and salary levels of all kinds of work choices must be presented to students.

Principals and vocational education teachers might be required to take a prescribed number of hours of in-service training in sex equity courses. Given the limited resources

of rural schools, this type of training might best be prepared through a demonstration project funded at the state level.

Information for Potential Employers and Co-Workers

Demonstration programs can be funded to help employers in rural communities overcome biases about women in non-traditional jobs. Employers and male co-workers need information and support in incorporating women into traditionally male work places. Given adequate information about the work which women can do, employers may not be so resistant to hiring women. A high success rate in finding jobs for women has been attained in communities where this kind of information program has been carried out.

Counseling for Rural Female Voc-Ed Students

Demonstration programs can be funded to provide pre-work counseling to females planning on entering non-traditional vocations. These students need to realistically discuss problems likely to result from sharing the traditional work place of men. They need realistic information on job performance expectations and on the physical aspects of the work place. They need to know ahead of time what will be expected of them and that they must be productive. (Will the place of work be dirty, noisy, crowded? Do the female students understand the physical effort necessary to perform the job on an eight-hour-a-day basis? Do they understand that they may be dirty

and uncomfortable at times? Do they understand that the job may, in fact, entail real physical danger?)

They also need realistic information about on-the-job behavior. They need an opportunity to discuss and prepare to handle problems which may arise, including sexual harrassment and how to deal with joking and teasing, especially of a sexual nature. These discussions need to be straightforward and not sugar-coated. They need to be handled sensitively so as to provide accurate information about possible on-the-job behavior, without discouraging or frightening young girls who may have led sheltered lives. These sessions might best be handled by women who are actually working in these jobs, who can come in their work clothes, and talk realistically about the work conditions, skills required, and on-the-job personal relationships.

Rural females taking vocational courses may also need counseling on how other people (husbands, families, peers, church members) may feel about their doing this kind of work. They may need support and assistance in providing factual information about job opportunities, salaries and working conditions in order to counter doubts and suspicions of others regarding their work choice.

Rural women taking vocational courses need to be made aware of affirmative action goals, so that they can vigoriously pursue employment on federal projects. A new rural initiative on Project Area Construction (PAC) is especially designed to increase employment for minorities and women on federally-funded projects, such as the Tennessee-Tombigbee navigation channel, in rural areas.

Demonstration Programs to Overcome Logistical Problems

Because some rural women may be hampered by lack of transportation or by unwillingness to leave the known community, funding might be provided to carry courses to the community, using local places of business and industry if at all possible. This approach makes especially good sense if a new industry is locating in an area.

Flexitime educational programs and jobs would enable rural women to obtain education or work while still meeting their family obligations. Split-time, or shared time, arrangements would also help.

Child care arrangements in the local community, employing aides from the community, might be more acceptable to rural women than arrangements at place-of-work outside the community.

Using Women's Networks

Women's networks or support groups are essential to help rural females both prior to seeking non-traditional employment and after obtaining such employment. Beforehand, these groups can help women to overcome traditional values, to become aware of job opportunities, earning potential, affirmative action goals, skills needed, problems likely to be encountered, how to handle family resistance, etc. Rural southern women seeking non-traditional employment also need support because their goals may be different from those of other females in the community. After women are employed, support groups are important to help with the problems they will face. For instance,

the Coal Employment Project has a newsletter and acts as a support group in which women working in the mines can gather to share problems, ideas, and solutions to difficult situations. The Sharecroppers Association provides similar support for its members.

Using Rural Organizations to Foster Change

A number of groups have strong and pervasive grass roots organizations in the rural South. The assistance of these groups should be tapped to help disseminate information about job opportunities for females in non-traditional vocations. Examples of groups which can be enlisted to assist are: the Farm Bureau, Kiwanis, and Jaycees, and their women's auxiliaries such as the Jaycettes.

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